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JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE

JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL



**Engaged Service Leadership: Leading and Retaining Millennial
Officers in the U.S. Armed Forces**

by

Stephen D. Dorris

Colonel, United States Army

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ENGAGED SERVICE LEADERSHIP: LEADING AND RETAINING MILLENNIAL
OFFICERS IN THE U.S. ARMED FORCES

By

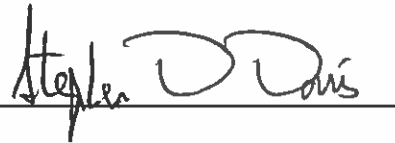
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This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes. (or appropriate statement per the Academic Integrity Policy)

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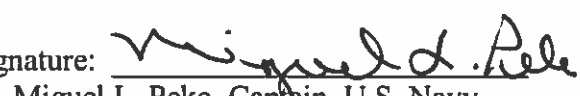
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Abstract

Estimated at between 76 and 80 million members, Millennials rival the 77.7 million “baby-boomers” that were born between 1946 and 1964 as the largest, single American generational cohort. With the ongoing retirement of American military “baby-boomers,” Millennials now comprise 30 to 50% of all Active Duty military service members in the United States (U.S.) Armed Forces. Literature on Millennial leaders within the U.S. military is limited so there is need for further study to identify the specific work traits of this generational cohort, the leadership style(s) Millennials best respond to, and the coaching and mentoring techniques senior leaders should employ to retain this young and emerging officer population.

This study compares transactional and transformational management styles, as well as service versus servant leader characteristics, to provide insight into adapting existing hierarchical leadership styles and coaching/mentoring programs within the U.S. Armed Forces to improve leadership, communication, and mentoring between senior generational cohorts and the Millennial commissioned officers they lead. The intent of the study is to explain work place conflict between generational cohorts and address mitigation of existing bureaucratic barriers to improve job satisfaction for Millennial officers, resulting in higher retention rates for this population within the U.S. Armed Forces.

Dedication

To my wife and soul mate, thank you for your present encouragement and undying support. Without you, the sum of all of my reasons to strive to excel in this life would fall far short of any of my intended goals. Thank you for all that you sacrifice each day to support me, our son, and the citizens of this great nation.

To my son, thank you for patiently allowing me the time in your life to complete the work that military leadership positions required of me. Thank you for challenging your mother and I with thoughts that far exceeded our own. You have a very bright future and I am confident you will make the most of every opportunity to set and accomplish your own lofty goals moving forward.

To my extended family and friends, thank you for always supporting me as we embarked upon the journey the U.S. Army provided to us. Your love, support, and friendship are always close to our hearts. Without you in mind, my service to this nation would never have been as rewarding.

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I would also like to acknowledge my fellow seminar classmates and instructors; thank you for investing the time and energy required to make this academic enterprise a rewarding experience. The academic challenges we faced were difficult, but with excellent instruction and a team that rowed hard together, the effort as a whole was extremely worthwhile. I wish only the best to each of you as you progress in your careers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

They are known as “Millennials” – the first generation to reach adulthood in the new millennium.¹ Born between 1980 and 2000, this generational cohort is recognized by other names around the world such as the Net generation, Generation Y, the Google Generation, and Echo-Boomers.² Generations are composed of a society-wide peer group shaped by older generations, historical events, shared experiences, and are considered to be the average period between the birth of the parents and their offspring – about 20 years.³

Estimated at between 76 and 80 million members, Millennials rival the 77.7 million “baby-boomers” that were born between 1946 and 1964 as the single largest American generational cohort.⁴ Couple this statistic with the ongoing retirement of many American military “baby-boomers,” and as of 2011 Millennials comprise 30 to 50% of all Active Duty military service members in the United States (U.S.) Armed Forces.⁵ As this generational transition continued, Millennials now comprise the majority of all junior to mid-grade level commissioned officers serving in the U.S. military. Because the literature on Millennial leaders within the U.S. military is limited, there is need for further study to identify the specific work traits of this generational cohort, the leadership style(s)

¹ Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, (New York, NY: Random House 2000), 4.

² Wayne A. Sinclair, “Millennials Merging: Leading a New Generation in War,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 90, no. 9 (September 2006), 71.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Paul Calvert, Gene Kamena, and James E. Lackey, “Millennials and Transformational Leaders: A Winning Team for the Future – Part 1 of 2,” *Fires* (November-December 2010), 68.

⁵ Edward Cox, Kent W. Park, Rachel M. Sondheimer, and Isaiah Wilson, III, “Growing Military Professionalism Across Generations,” *Military Review* (November-December 2011), 34.

Millennials best respond to, and the coaching and mentoring techniques senior leaders should employ to retain this young and emerging officer population.⁶

Generational differences in beliefs, values, preferences, and attitudes affect how each generation views and responds to their environment and the leadership provided to them in the workplace.⁷ These differences create internal and external factors that organizations and leaders must understand and address if they are to lead and retain the best available talent from each generational cohort. Currently, a gap exists within leadership and organizational management literature that specifically addresses how more senior generational cohorts (Boomers and Xers) within the U.S. military view Millennials and how Millennials respond to differing organizational leadership.

A failure by senior military leaders to understand the specific generational cohort issues nascent within the Millennial officer population results in friction and dissatisfaction by Millennial officers that they will not continue to endure. U.S. military senior leaders must adapt to this newest generational cohort to properly employ and communicate with the officers they count on to lead their subordinate military formations. A poor appreciation by senior military leaders to understand and employ the types of coaching and mentoring techniques that most appeal to Millennial officers will significantly affect the desire of these officers to continue service beyond their initial term; especially if the pull from external factors in their personal lives is high. A collision of these variables within the life of a Millennial presents the potential for a dangerous generational gap occurring during the transition of military leadership between

⁶ Linda Dulin, "Leadership preferences of a generational Y cohort: a mixed-methods investigation," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 2, no. 1 (May 2008), 45.

⁷ Carolyn W. Fore, "Next Generation Leadership: Millennials As Leaders," *PhD dissertation*, Capella University, (2012), 4.

generational cohorts. U.S. military leadership must address this gap or risk significant talent management losses from this growing and important officer population.

Furthermore, if not addressed the transitional gap presents a clear and present risk to the ability of the U.S. Armed Forces to maintain a competitive, qualitative manning edge over near peer and emerging security threats to the nation.⁸

This study asserts that a gap exists within the leadership doctrine of all four military services to adequately understand and inform leaders on the best methods to effectively lead Millennial military officers. This study conducts an analysis of existing research on U.S. military Millennial officers and examines case studies from U.S. military services to identify friction points between generational cohorts. It also identifies internal and external factors that drive Millennial officers to depart the service and discusses ways to mitigate the internal factors driving separation using transformational communication, leadership, and mentoring/coaching techniques to improve retention of these officers within the U.S. military. The results of this study should inform revision of leadership and mentoring discussions within existing military manuals. The results also propose a modification to existing organizational communication structures and mentoring practices to bridge the needs of Millennial officers and limit the internal factors driving them from service.

⁸ Carolyn W. Fore, "Next Generation Leadership: Millennials As Leaders," 10.

Significance of the Study

Current data on Millennial recruitment suggests that 3% of the population are choosing to serve in the military.⁹ This is a lower percentage when compare against the 5-7% of volunteers from earlier generational cohorts since the inception of the all-volunteer force. However, 3% of nearly 80 million Millennials is more than an adequate number of volunteers to man and lead the current force structure of the U.S. Armed Forces. It would appear recruiting Millennials into the U.S. military is not the issue, retaining them is.

The 2016 Defense Authorization Act created a blended military retirement system that allows service members with fewer than 12-years of accrued active duty service by January 01, 2018 to opt into a new pay-as-you-go retirement system that utilizes the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) to place matching funds (not to exceed 5%) into a traditional or Roth Individual Retirement Account (IRA) for military service members choosing to invest into their individual retirement accounts. At the completion of 20 years of service, military members would be paid 40% of their retirement pay and an additional 2.5% in pay for every year served thereafter. Additionally, once reaching the age of 59 and a half, they could withdraw any traditional or Roth IRA dollars invested into their TSP accounts during their military career.

Service members with less than 12-years of accrued active duty service could also choose to remain in the traditional 20-year all-or-nothing retirement system, which provides 50% of base pay and a 2.5% increase in retired pay for every additional year of

⁹ David Dixon, "Millennials Understanding This Generation and the Military," *Army* 66, no. 3 (March 2016), 22.

service after that. Non-matching contributions to traditional or Roth IRA accounts can still be made by the service member using the TSP. This additional TSP money could also be withdrawn once the service member reaches the age of 59 and a half.

All service members entering active duty effective January 01, 2018 or later will be automatically enrolled into the new pay-as-you-go blended retirement system. The new blended pay-as-you-go retirement plan greatly appeals to the near term goals of Millennials since it allows them greater financial flexibility in departing military service and transferring any accrued TSP retirement savings into a civilian IRA account. This entitlement creates a significant external factor for military leaders to overcome in retaining Millennial officers, since it appeals to the grow-and-then-go mentality Millennials already bring with them into the workplace. Without a solid leadership and mentorship plan that specifically addresses and improves the internal job factors that influence Millennials to remain in service, military leaders will be hard pressed to overcome this powerful new external factor that encourages Millennials to separate from service and transition their skills as motivated workers, into the civilian sector.

While generations do not share a single understanding of their world, they do share a context of the military problems and a set of resources, tools, ideas, and values that shape how they approach those problems.¹⁰ A study of U.S. military history demonstrates that every generation of junior officer experiences a sense of disconnection from older generations; a feeling that their seniors, “just don’t get-it.”¹¹ However, communication, education, and mentorship go a long way toward ameliorating this

¹⁰ J.P. Clark, “Adapting to Strategic Change,” *Parameters* 46, no. 3 (2016), 25-26.

¹¹ Cox, Park, Sondheimer, and Wilson, III, “Growing Military Professionalism Across Generations,” 41.

feeling. Supporting this position is research indicating that Millennials want to work for an inspiring organization, to operate in a results-oriented environment, to innovate and influence the workplace, and to engage with mentors to improve.¹² The literature on Millennial work-based traits captures these attributes and articulates the need to educate and inform today's organizational leaders on the importance of understanding and training subordinates to lead, inspire, and mentor today's Millennial worker or risk losing them to other life passions and business opportunities. A failure to adapt existing military institutions and doctrine to inform leaders on Millennial attributes, values, and beliefs comes at great organizational risk to the future success of the U.S. military and negatively affects its competitive edge on future battlefields.

This study identifies the work traits and values of the three generational cohorts currently comprising the U.S. Armed Forces.¹³ The study discusses how Millennials are viewed by other senior generational cohorts to identify and mitigate work place conflict.¹⁴ The study describes and compares Transformational versus Transactional leadership styles¹⁵ and discusses Service versus Servant-based leadership principles as a method toward effectively leading and positively influencing Millennials.¹⁶

¹² Michael Mabrey, "Lead Us," *Proceedings Magazine*, (February 2015), 7.

¹³ Jean M. Twenge, "A Review of the Empirical Evidence on Generational Differences in Work Attitudes," *Journal of Business and Psychology* 25, no 2 (February 2010), 208.

¹⁴ Rodney H. Deyoe and Terry L. Fox, "Identifying strategies to minimize workplace conflict due to generational differences," *Journal of Behavioral Studies in Business* 5 (2012), 6-7.

¹⁵ Nuttawuth Muenjohn and Anona Armstrong, "Evaluating the Structural Validity of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), Capturing the Leadership Factors of Transformational-Transactional Leadership," *Contemporary Management Research* 4, no. 1 (March 2008), 4-5.

¹⁶ Janis B. Balda and Fernando Mora, "Adapting Leadership Theory and Practice For The Networked, Millennial Generation," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 5, no. 3 (2011), 19-21.

The retention of quality personnel is a major effort of any successful organization and is especially vital to the long-term stability and capacity of the U.S. Armed Forces.¹⁷ To retain quality personnel over time, this study analyzes the utility of educating military leaders on retaining manifest talent and harnessing un-manifested talent to improve the U.S. military's in-service retention effort for its junior officer population.¹⁸ This study also highlights the value of improving work place satisfaction and the likelihood of Millennials remaining with their organizations when increased employee-to-peer and supervisor feedback by-way of reverse-mentoring, group-mentoring, or anonymous-mentoring strategies occurs.¹⁹ This methodology provides a means toward retaining enough quality Millennial commissioned officers to bridge the transitional gap between departing generational cohorts from Baby Boomer and Gen Xer officer populations and protects the future manning readiness of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Assumptions and Limitations

This research study specifically focuses on U.S. born Millennials as a generational cohort and their interaction with other generational cohorts found within the Active Duty military and private business sectors. This study did not capture, compare, or contrast its own interview data nor does it attempt to compare available data sets from within the U.S. Armed Forces. Some of the recommendations and conclusions from this study can be applied to all U.S. Millennials as a generational cohort, but the research used

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America*. U.S. Department of Defense, Washington, DC (08 February 2011), 16-17.

¹⁸ M.S. Srinivasan, "An Integral Approach to Talent Management," *XIMB Journal of Management* (September 2011), 82-86.

¹⁹ Jeanne C. Meister and Karie Willyerd, "Mentoring Millennials," *Harvard Business Review* (May 2010), 70-72.

to inform this study most specifically applies to U.S. military commissioned officers as a sub-set of the overall U.S. military population.

Subsequent studies using available data sets from all four military services would be useful in identifying statistical correlations for the variables associated with specific leadership styles or in-service counseling/mentorship programs that positively correlate into higher job satisfaction, productivity, and retention rates of Millennial-aged enlisted and officers as a sub-set of the entire U.S. military population. This study did not attempt to quantify and compare current and targeted retention rates for Millennial-aged officers currently serving within the U.S. Armed Forces nor did it specifically capture and correlate data on why Millennials might remain or depart service over time.

This study synthesizes exiting literature on Millennials, as a generational cohort, from studies and analysis conducted within the private business sector and U.S. military to inform senior leaders on how best to retain Millennials using leadership methods and coaching/mentoring techniques that most appeal to them. Not every case study utilized within this study will address in-service retention questions, but all will address leadership principles in relation to influencing Millennials. Assertions within this study could potentially apply to military-aged Millennials serving within the armed forces of other Western Democracies, but this study will not attempt to make that correlation. The author recommends that interested parties conduct research with military-aged Millennials from other Western Democracies using applicable data sets for each population. This is because many of the life-changing external factors for a U.S. Millennial are specific to the U.S. political and social culture and environment.

Research Methodology

The case study research methodology is the most frequently used in business, organizational, and management research.²⁰ This allows the researcher to draw from existing studies, professional journal articles, and academic books on the topics of leading and retaining Millennials within the business and military work sectors. Research models used for this study were conducted in the last 17 years and specifically targeted commissioned officer populations within the U.S. Army and Air Force. Additional research material from the U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Air Force were included to strengthen arguments on the utility of teaching generational leadership principles to mid-to-senior grade leaders. This research demonstrates how leadership transactions and retention improve when caring and concerned leaders, who understand and employ generational leadership techniques into their leadership styles, lead Marines, Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen. This study used no live subjects and the author conducted no interviews. All data collected and synthesized for this study came from existing literature on the topic.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter 2 of the study provides a review of the existing literature on Millennials and their work related values, beliefs, and influences as compared with their Baby

²⁰ J.R. Evans and QMJ Editorial Board, "Insights on the future of quality management research," *Quality Management Journal* 20, no. 1 (2013), 51-52.

Boomer and Gen Xer superiors. The chapter also captures data on workplace related conflict between Millennials and the other two more senior generational cohorts. The chapter further identifies a gap within existing military leadership doctrine and provides a framework toward improving existing organizational management techniques using Transformational versus Transactional leadership styles while demonstrating the characteristics of Service versus Servant Leadership. To further the goal of retention, the study introduces the concept of Manifest Talent and harnessing Un-manifested Talent to assist leaders in developing a sound and more inclusive retention strategy. The study also introduces mentoring techniques like Reverse, Group, and Anonymous Mentoring as a means toward appealing to Millennial goals of receiving consistent feedback and working at improving their performance.

Chapter 3 examines two case studies and literature involving Millennial commissioned officer populations from the U.S. Army and Air Force as well as a thesis discussing leadership and retention of Marine Corps Millennials to capture lessons learned and observations from military Millennial populations within these specific branches of services. Other literature in the chapter includes perspectives from a Millennial U.S. Navy Lieutenant and two U.S. Air Force Colonels on best leadership practices for Millennial Sailors and Armen operating within military organizations.

The intended goal for examining the literature is to glean the best practices from existing information in the field of organizational management and leadership to positively influence leadership that retains Millennials. Knowledge from the fields of business management, military history, and military innovation and adaptation will provide a framework to answer the key research question and identify best practices that

can then be applied to the recommended adaptations to existing military leadership doctrine, organizational communication structures, and coaching and mentoring models.

Chapter 4 provides a discussion on the results of the case studies and supplemental literature, as well as promotes required institutional or doctrinal adaptations to improve upon existing leadership and the retention of Millennials. The chapter explains identified relationships between leadership styles and coaching/mentoring feedback techniques as a means of influencing Millennial attitudes toward their work environment. It also describes what leadership type or attributes Millennials best respond to and which mentoring types Millennials desire to best improve upon organizational retention goals.

Chapter 5 discusses noted gaps for future research and provides conclusions and recommendations based upon the case studies and a synthesis of the key elements from Service and Transformational leadership styles to create an effective way to influence and retain military Millennials moving forward. The chapter also discusses potential implications for required institutional or doctrinal adaptations as Millennials assess into the U.S. Armed Forces.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Describing the Workplace Environment

Work traits and values of the three generational cohorts

As introduced in Chapter 1, members of a generation live through a common set of social and historical events that shape their views about the world, their attitudes toward life, and their values. Because of their shared experiences, generational cohorts often bring their shared values, beliefs, preferences, and attitudes to work.¹ Though most associated with a specific generational cohort do not all think alike and should not be stereotyped as such, studies of generations in the workforce illustrate how generational differences in values, beliefs, preferences, and attitudes lead to discord in the workplace.²

Shared experiences of generational cohorts shape feelings that become shared values.³ Different generations express their values in different ways and with differing views on internal priorities, which can lead to generational conflict.⁴ An example of different ways of viewing the same value is the importance of family as a shared value across generations. Older generations worked long hours to provide for their families as a way of showing how much they cared whereas younger generations prefer to work fewer

¹ W. Strauss & N. Howe, *Generations: The History of America's future, 1584 to 2069*. (New York, NY: William Morrow, 1991), 67.

² Jean M. Twenge, "A Review of the Empirical Evidence on Generational Differences in Work Attitudes," *Journal of Business and Psychology* 25, no 2 (February 2010), 205.

³ Strauss & Howe, *Generations: The History of America's future, 1584 to 2069*, 74.

⁴ Jennifer J. Deal, David G. Altman, and Steven G. Rogelberg, "Millennials at Work: What We Know and What We Need to Do (If Anything)," *Journal of Business and Psychology* 25, no 3 (March 2010), 191.

hours to spend more personal time with family members.⁵ Thus, former generations utilized an indirect approach toward demonstrating their love and affections for their families while the later generation, having experienced the emotional fallout of their parent's absence, choose a different path toward emotional success.

An individual's attitude is more subject to change during a lifetime because of the influences of age, education, and experiences.⁶ Attitudes represent feelings about a person or thing and are exhibited through behavior.⁷ Levels of commitment to work is one way to determine generational differences in attitudes toward work. Results from a generational study on the topic of work commitment indicated that Generation X lawyers were more concerned that their work be socially significant and that they possessed good coworker relations while Baby Boomers expected their work to be hard and cooperation to exist among their teams. Generation X and Millennial lawyers both emphasized personal fulfillment rather than just working hard and were more loyal to their professional group than to their employer; this group also tended to be more individualistically focused.⁸

Studies of generational cohorts operating within the civilian workplace found similar characteristics being exhibited among generational cohorts:

- Baby Boomers: Optimistic toward leadership, teamwork oriented, looking forward to cooperating with others, ambitious, and tended to be workaholics.⁹

⁵ Ibid., 194.

⁶ Deal, Altman, and Rogelberg, "Millennials at Work: What We Know and What We Need to Do (If Anything)," 195.

⁷ Carolyn W. Fore, "Next Generation Leadership: Millennials As Leaders," *PhD dissertation*, Capella University, 2012, 40.

⁸ Ibid., 41.

⁹ Christiana Houck, "Multigenerational and Virtual: How Do We Build A Mentoring Program for Today's Workforce?," *Performance Improvement* 50, no. 2 (2011), 26

- Generation Xers: Skeptical of leadership, self-reliant, risk takers, and highly seeking a work-life balance.¹⁰
- Millennials: Trusting of leadership if receiving mutual respect, self-confident, prefer to work in teams, achievement oriented, prefer meaningful work-life balance.¹¹

An examination of Millennial military personnel found similar workplace characteristics being exhibited by U.S. Marine officers:

- Positive Characteristics: Orderly and structured, high self-esteem, positive attitude, technologically savvy, team collaboration, determined to matter, trusting of authority, prioritized safety, good followers, and thrived on multitasking.¹²
- Negative Characteristics: Unsettled and uncomfortable by chaos and friction, lacked capacity to connect with difficult people (i.e., easily offended), not experienced in dealing with personal loss, lacked creative thinking, trouble leading others without achieving consensus, easily dejected by adversity, expect constant guidance, averse to risk taking, prone to piecemeal efforts, and poor discipline with small yet important details.¹³

Within the *Journal of Business and Psychology*, Jean Twenge summarized an examination of several research studies that specifically examined the work traits and work related characteristics of Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials workers. In her summary she found that Generation X, and specifically Millennial workers, expressed a weaker work ethic, believed that work was less central to their lives, more highly valued leisure time, and sought more freedom and work-life balance than their Baby Boomer counterparts.¹⁴ The results of her research found a greater drive existed in Generation X and Millennials to find meaningful work for achievement while allowing for plenty of leisure time away from the office. This was a situation Twenge asserted as

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Janis B. Balda, & Fernando Mora, "Adapting Leadership Theory and Practice For The Networked, Millennial Generation," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 5, no. 3 (2011), 16.

¹² Wayne A. Sinclair, "Millennials Merging: Leading a New Generation in War," *Marine Corps Gazette* 90, no. 9 (September 2006), 73.

¹³ Ibid., 73.

¹⁴ Twenge, "A Review of the Empirical Evidence on Generational Differences in Work Attitudes," 204.

being highly contestable in today's work environment since today's employees are expected to spend even longer hours away from the home to achieve success.

Workplace Conflict

Millennials demand open communication with all personnel in their work environment; even those located outside of their immediate area of influence. Millennials believe in the power of teamwork and require constant feedback as a means of positively assessing their effectiveness and maintaining their confidence. Millennials are not interested in working over time for compensatory time off and are turned off by having to wait for other more senior personnel to make decisions on matters that affect a Millennials productivity.¹⁵ A result of these, and other work trait differences, provides a catalyst toward workplace conflict between Millennials and their more senior generational cohorts.

Time Management is one of the most contentious points among generational cohorts and is one of the most witnessed friction points in the workplace. Baby Boomers prefer to work long hours and often don't mind staying at work to get the job done. Millennials however prefer to come in, complete the task, and then have more free time available to pursue other interests. Baby Boomers view the workplace as a physical location while Generation X and Millennials view the workplace as occurring anytime and anywhere rather than being centered around a specific place.¹⁶ Coupling these differences in generational views and the pervasive nature technology plays in the lives of Millennials, often results in friction because Millennials utilize technology to free

¹⁵ Twenge, "A Review of the Empirical Evidence on Generational Differences in Work Attitudes," 208.

¹⁶ Jeremy Doyle, "Transitioning Millennials into Leadership," *Master of Business Administration and Master in Management*, The College of St. Scholastica, (Duluth, MN, 2014), 21.

them to work from any location at any time during the day. Older generational cohorts do not favorably view the absence of employees from the workplace as being productive. Their expectations match their own worldview of work occurring on-the-job. They expect Millennials to put in the same amount of time at the office to complete a team project as everyone else. Millennials would argue they can still be productive and contribute to group efforts even while operating outside of the workplace.

Communication preferences are another friction point between generational cohorts. Regarding performance-based feedback, Baby Boomers prefer occasional communication from their boss; a check on their azimuth over time to ensure they are in line with their bosses' vision. Generation X employees think regular feedback from their boss is acceptable, but prefer it be provided at predetermined points in time (e.g., "...we'll talk about your performance next month following our previously scheduled productivity meeting"). Millennials, however, prefer constant feedback via multiple methods of communication and from others outside of their immediate supervisory chain. This might place a Millennial at odds with a boss who expects for employees to receive feedback once he or she has had time to gather several data points.¹⁷

Research by Deal, Altman, and Rogelberg found that Millennials tended to be less fit and more obese than older generational cohorts. This finding negatively highlights Millennials as being physically soft and mentally comfortable in their technology-laden environment. This condition portrays Millennials as being physically and mentally less able to deal with adversity than older peer groups. Additionally, Deal, Altman, and Rogelberg found Millennials were more open and acceptable to having body tattoos; a

¹⁷ Doyle, "Transitioning Millennials into Leadership," 21.

physical condition considered offensive by some leaders from older generational cohorts.¹⁸ These conditions, coupled with differing views on acceptable dress codes, provides fuel for workplace conflict between the generations.

Leadership Doctrine Adaptations

Existing military leadership doctrine

Current military doctrine on leadership discusses the importance of inculcating institutional values from the U.S. Armed Forces into all new members of the team. Army doctrine specifically addresses the need for Soldiers to adhere to the seven Army core values: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage as well as expecting Soldiers to be resilient, adaptive, and creative.¹⁹ U.S. Air Force leadership doctrine more closely aligns the Army's core values with key attributes for Airmen to possess, and further describes Air Force core values as: integrity, service before self, and excellence in all we do.²⁰ U.S. Marine Corps leadership doctrine discusses the requirement for leaders to possess a strong commitment to service, honor, and discipline.²¹ Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 6-11 describes being a Marine as a state of mind that is cut into the heart of every Marine during their initial training regimen. Noted author T.R. Fehrenbach insisted Marines were, "...human material not one whit better than that of the human society from which it came, but hammered into

¹⁸ Deal, Altman, and Rogelberg, "Millennials at Work: What We Know and What We Need to Do (If Anything)," 195-198.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of the Army, "Leader Development," *Field Manual 6-22*, U.S. Department of the Army, (Washington, DC: 30 June 2015), 1-7.

²⁰ U.S. Department of the Air Force, "Volume II-Leadership," *Air Force Doctrine Document*, U.S. Department of the Air Force, (Washington, DC: 08 August 2015), 33.

²¹ U.S. Department of the Navy, "Leading Marines," *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 6-11*, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, (Washington, DC: 27 November 2002), 11.

form by a different forge and hardened with a different fire.”²² Marine doctrine demands Marines believe they are a cut above and expects them to achieve more using institutional leadership principles not technology to fight and win.

Leadership doctrine from the U.S. Armed Forces describes and discusses the importance of building teams, establishing trust, being competent and caring, and constantly assessing one’s self and adapting to the ever changing environment as required. U.S. Army and Marine Corps manuals on leadership describe external friction as being unknown enemy actions, loss of communication with higher headquarters, difficult terrain, and internal friction. Internal friction is described in doctrine as the dislike or distrust between leaders and followers or leaders who fail to adapt to changing circumstances. Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 6-11 describes a leader’s ability to negate internal friction by not pursuing a similar pathway to solutions simply based upon previous experience.²³ Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22 describes mitigating internal friction by leaders effectively interacting with others and by knowing what and how others perceive them. ADRP 6-22 further states, “...a leader relies on accepting the character, reactions, and motives of oneself and others utilizing interpersonal tact, to combine these skills, along with recognizing diversity and displaying self-control, to bring about stability in different situations.”²⁴

Existing U.S. doctrine on military leadership demonstrates a solid appreciation by the military institution on properly applying leadership to others. Though battle tested,

²² U.S. Department of the Navy, “Leading Marines,” 6.

²³ U.S. Department of the Navy, “Leading Marines,” 56.

²⁴ U.S. Department of the Army, “Army Leadership,” *Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22*, U.S. Department of the Army, (Washington, DC: 10 September 2012), 5-2.

U.S. leadership doctrine must evolve to meet the complexity of future operational environments and those expected to thrive within it. This study found that U.S. military doctrine selects and carefully constructs the values and attributes inherent within each institution to ensure it resonates within the hearts and minds of its service members. It captures the importance of diversity and impresses upon military leaders how best to appreciate and utilize the skills that different people groups bring to the operational environment. U.S. military leadership doctrine also provides excellent material on developing counseling skills and improving upon existing human interaction skills. However, existing doctrine lacks a description and appreciation for the differences in worldview that comprise the generational cohorts that makeup the U.S. armed forces. It fails to depict how different generational cohorts view the world, receive information, and trust those delivering the message.

Words and phrases are powerful tools utilized by military leaders to communicate policy, provide guidance, and to maintain the good order, morale, and discipline of organizational units. Without an understanding and appreciation for the inherent differences found within differing generational cohorts, military leaders risk talking past, miscommunicating, or misunderstanding their targeted audience, increasing internal friction and conflict between parties which results in frustration, feelings of disconnectedness, which results in an apathy for continued service.

Transformational versus Transactional leadership

Transformational and transactional leadership are terms coined as leadership concepts by James Burns in his 1978 book, *Leadership*. In the book, Burns defined leadership as, "...leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the

values and motivations--the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations--of both leaders and followers.”²⁵ Burns goes on to describe the genius of leadership as, “...lying in the manner in which leaders see and act on their and their followers’ values and motivations.”²⁶ Leadership, Burns surmised, was inseparable from the needs and goals of followers. Thus, the essence of the leader-follower relationship was the interaction of persons with differing levels of motivation, and power potential, and skill in pursuit of a common or joint purpose.²⁷ This interaction takes one of two forms: transactional or transformational leadership.

Burns defined transactional leadership as being when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for purposes of an exchange or valued thing. The exchange could be economical, political, or psychological in nature; for example, a swap of goods or one good for money; a trading of votes; hospitality to another person in exchange for a willingness to listen to one’s troubles.²⁸ The transaction involves each party’s understanding of the power, resources, and attitudes that are tied to the exchange. Each side is bargaining to gain something in return for an action promised to provide worth or value to the exchange; for example, performing work to receive a paycheck, being awarded time off for over time work performed up front, or a showing up on time to work each day to prevent termination of employment for unsatisfactory performance.

²⁵ James MacGregor Burns, “Transactional and Transforming Leadership,” *Leadership*, Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., New York, NY (1978), 133.

²⁶ Burns, “Transactional and Transforming Leadership,” 133.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

Key to this transactional model of leadership is the lack of relationship that bonds the leader and follower together in a mutual and continuing pursuit of a higher purpose.²⁹

In contrast to the transactional leadership model, transformational leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Power bases are still linked as with the transactional exchange, but not as a counterweight to be used for one side's gain for compliance by the other. Instead, the transformational model depends on the two sides mutually supporting one another for a common purpose.³⁰

Transformational leadership is described as: empowering, exhorting, inspiring, exalting, and uplifting one another to achieve a common purpose while meeting the personal goals of both parties.³¹

The appealing nature of transformational leadership is that it raises the level of human conduct and the ethical aspirations of both the leader and led, producing a transforming effect on both.³² Transformational leadership is leadership that transcends the transactional model, which is rooted in a self-centered and apathetic nature. All followers, if given a choice, would desire to follow the leadership of caring leaders who engage them on a personal level and assist them with achieving personal goals.

Servant versus Service based leadership

Servant leadership fits well within the construct of transformational leadership. The leader serves the best interests of the follower in a common purpose for the good of

²⁹ Burns, "Transactional and Transforming Leadership," 133.

³⁰ Ibid., 134.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

the organization. R.K. Greenleaf described servant leaders as requiring a leader who views themselves as a servant-first.³³ The servant ensures the needs of others are his/her priority. Greenleaf described the test of servant-leadership as, "...do those served grow as persons, do they while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, or more likely themselves to become servants?"³⁴ However, an examination of research by Myers and Sadaghiani found that the intrinsic motivation and desire for external reward removes Millennials from possessing a true appreciation for, or a desire to interact with, the practices of servant-based leadership.³⁵ Myers and Sadaghiani found that Millennials view servant based leadership differently than earlier generational cohorts. For Millennials, the word servant creates an internal dilemma because it equates to the negative connotation of servitude in a post-colonial, post-feminist world. For a Millennial, servant based leadership equals a forced or coercive transaction between leader and led.³⁶

This assertion notes that Millennials have a great willingness to serve outside organizations by volunteering and often participate in internships prior to being hired to a new job as a full time employee. Millennials are interested in succeeding at everything they strive to achieve, including putting their professional skills to work when they volunteer their time.³⁷ It is important for Millennials to make an important impact on the world and in doing so they view their efforts as service. To a Millennial, competent

³³ Janis B. Balda and Fernando Mora, "Adapting Leadership Theory and Practice For The Networked, Millennial Generation," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 5, no. 3 (2011), 19.

³⁴ R.K. Greenleaf, *The Servant as Religious Leader*, Windy Row, N.H. (Windy Row Press, 1982), 14.

³⁵ Balda and Mora, "Adapting Leadership Theory and Practice For The Networked, Millennial Generation," 19.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 20.

leadership is highly valued and mutual respect is earned as engagement occurs between leader and led. Because Millennials yearn for consistent communication up, down, and laterally, they view themselves as members within a service-based system where gains and losses are shared by all. This condition is a similar existence to their upbringing as children and better aligns with Millennial worldviews on participation in a transactional environment. In sum, Millennials desire to follow positive action and a demonstrated service-oriented example, not a mere dialogue by their leaders.

Research by O’Connell and Gibbons found that linking an organization’s purpose to its social responsibility initiatives provides an excellent platform for creating a service focus among leaders.³⁸ They found that visibility and buy-in to the vision of the organization was the top reason why Millennials chose one job over another. This beat out jobs providing better promotion potential, a higher salary, and the possibility of better pay raises over time. O’Connell and Gibbons assert that in order for an organization to unleash its fullest potential it must help its employees experience the power of creating or building something that has a meaningful purpose by employing service and purpose-based leadership.³⁹

Millennials buy into the notion that purpose and service fuel transformation. As Henry David Thoreau wrote, “What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving them.”⁴⁰ O’Connell and Gibbons assert, “...when people put their purposes and values first, the right results follow.” Service leadership is

³⁸ Wendy O’Connell and David Gibbons, “At Your Service- Leadership That Truly Inspires,” *The Journal for Quality and Participation* 38, no. 4 (January 2016), 27.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

about aligning community service to the business strategy, providing opportunities for others to serve and learn, and linking service to the company purpose.⁴¹

Retention

Manifest and Un-manifested talent techniques

Retaining and harnessing talent is a decisive factor in determining the success and effectiveness of an organization's future. Traditional talent management involves retaining existing or "manifest" talent already present within the organization.⁴² An example of this would be organizational leadership working to retain the top performers, hardest workers, and best junior leaders within an organization. The technique of spending energy and effort to keep the best is both highly embraced within the U.S. Armed Forces as well as within corporate America.

Traditionally speaking, personnel management for commissioned officers serving within the U.S. Armed Forces is classified into three categories and based on performance. Officers are grouped early in their careers based upon evaluation reports that allow personnel managers to rank order officers as being in the top third, middle third, or bottom third of a given officer population. Each tier is further sub-divided internally by personnel managers and selection boards to further delineate the best of the best from the rest of the peer group. Those officers ranking in the top 10% can expect different career opportunities from those officers in the top 30% of their peers. Officers falling in the top 50% of their peer group are still considered competitive for promotion,

⁴¹ O'Connell and Gibbons, "At Your Service- Leadership That Truly Inspires," 28.

⁴² M.S. Srinivasan, "An Integral Approach to Talent Management," *XIMB Journal of Management*, (September 2011), 81.

but are less likely to excel to the highest ranks without achieving more success. Those officers falling in the bottom 50% of a perspective year group can expect to achieve sub-par career opportunities and will likely end their careers as a mid-level manager.

When convening a centralized promotion board, military service branches combine officer Year Groups (YGs) together to ensure the most competitive talent is manifested from a given population set of commissioned officers falling within a three year window. Promotion boards break these personnel up into a below-the-zone (early promotion timeline comprising officers with the most junior dates of rank); primary zone (on time promotion timeline comprising officers with an average date of rank); and above the zone (late promotion timeline comprising officers with above average dates of rank). The services utilize the same selection board criteria to select the most competitive personnel for senior schools and command opportunities. Only those officers falling within the top third of their Year Group possess serious consideration for future schooling and command opportunities beyond the rank of Captain.

Top-tiered personnel are provided fast-track selection for early promotion, advanced schooling, nominated positions, or command. Those in the middle tier are pressured to improve or catch up to the top tiered personnel and those in the bottom tier are given left over assignments and promotion opportunities. Often bottom tiered personnel are asked to leave or recognize career limitations on their own and then choose to move on themselves.⁴³ Personnel managers and organizational leaders of industry and the military regard the “up-or-out” model as possessing the most effective way of

⁴³ M.S. Srinivasan, “An Integral Approach to Talent Management,” 81.

keeping organizations lean and mean.⁴⁴ Millennials, however, negatively view the “up-or-out” model as counterproductive to the overall good of the organization and its employees. This is because Millennials require their leaders to coach and commit to the employee; especially those that are struggling.

Examples of an integrated approach to talent management places value on organizational leadership working to manifest hidden talent within the average employee or the underperformer. Un-manifested talent are the people who can do more to achieve within the organization if provided the leadership and intellectual stimulus to realize their potential.⁴⁵ The Toyota Corporation utilizes an integrated technique to reward, but not pamper the high performers, and help to improve the underperformers. They view talent management in a less stratified and more inclusive way to gain the best results from human capital that the Toyota Corporation already invested in.⁴⁶ The Japanese refer to this as the “in-and-up” approach.

The importance of retaining un-manifested talent assists in meeting the requirements of today’s changing environment within the workplace. There is a growing number of talented corporate and military service members who possess moral aspirations to make meaningful contributions to society within the workplace.⁴⁷ Additionally, female employees make up much of today’s workforce and often must juggle the demands of work and family. To this population, work-life balance is important and the job does not define who they are as individuals. Research by Srinivasan found the best way to manifest human capital within the modern day

⁴⁴ Jack Welch, *Winning*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2005), 37-40.

⁴⁵ M.S. Srinivasan, “An Integral Approach to Talent Management,” 81.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 82.

workplace is for organizational leaders to embrace and employ most, if not all, of these six factors:⁴⁸

- Provide sufficient opportunity for professional and personal development.
- Tap into the moral dimension or higher purpose for the employees desire to contribute and serve within a particular organization; specifically why are they here?
- Provide work-life balance.
- Provide a woman-friendly and mutually respectful work environment.
- Understand the unique motivational needs of the individual employee and match them to an appropriate reward system.
- Pay them a fair and equitable salary for the duties performed. Money does not drive most Millennials to stay in a job, the ability to achieve what they love doing does.

Passion and a love for the job will not compensate for the failure to pay an appropriate salary over the long term. Millennials, like other generations, expect to be paid on a level that is commensurate with their value to the organization.

Mentoring Techniques that appeal to Millennials

Feedback is a vital stimulus toward motivating millennial workers to perform and feel confident as they serve their organizations. However, traditional methods of feedback and mentoring are not as well received by Millennials when compared against older generational cohorts. Research by Meister and Willyerd provides insight into the expectations of Millennials on the type, frequency, and methodology employed to provide them insight or feedback on job performance, professional goals, and future opportunities. Millennials prefer constant feedback from peers, superiors, and

⁴⁸ M.S. Srinivasan, "An Integral Approach to Talent Management," 84.

subordinates on team projects or group work. They view the work-life experience as an interwoven existence wherein they are always working to improve upon their personal and professional relationships, skill sets, and confidence.⁴⁹ Millennials are looking for those people who will help provide them the road map to success. They yearn for others that are willing to invest in their personal and professional growth and prefer utilizing technology to achieve this.⁵⁰

In pursuit of this effort, corporate America and academia have provided alternative means for leaders and employees to interact utilizing technology as a means to widen the lens on critical and technical knowledge. Technology can also increase the number and type of feedback received between parties as well as the frequency with which feedback is provided. One example of this technique is reverse mentoring. Using reverse mentoring, Millennials are matched to an executive and assigned to teach him or her how best to employ technology to communicate and message guidance or policy across an organization. In return, the junior employee is provided an opportunity to view decision-making and policy considerations at the executive level. This back and forth exchange of ideas, opportunity to look behind the executive-level curtain, and improved communication, builds trust and appreciation for the importance of the work being conducted at all levels of the organization.⁵¹ A similar comparison to this in the military would be the exchange between an Aide-de-Camp or Executive Assistant and a General/Flag Officer.

⁴⁹ Jeanne C. Meister and Karie Willyerd, "Mentoring Millennials," *Harvard Business Review*, (May 2010), 68-69.

⁵⁰ Meister and Willyerd, "Mentoring Millennials," 69.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Another potential mentoring method is group mentoring. This is less resource intensive, yet an effective means for Millennials to receive feedback from peers, superiors, and subordinates alike. This technique allows for subject matter experts in highly technical fields, senior executives, or peers within other organizations to share real world experiences, how-to knowledge, and encouragement to promote the intellectual exchange of ideas that Millennials are looking for to improve their professional skill set or to work through a specific problem they may never have encountered.⁵² This technique can occur in many differing constructs to best impact the targeted audience and gain efficiency for the organization. For example, one mentor can work with 5-7 employees, who are also tied to a network of peers within and outside of the organization. A military example of this technique would be the Multi-Source Assessment Feedback (MSAF) 360 tool. Though the MSAF 360 is not interactive and is more of an assessment based off feedback received at a particular point in time, it allows the Army service member to receive feedback on personal and professional skills by the peers, superiors, and subordinates selected by the service member.

The last method to consider is that of anonymous mentoring. This more advanced method uses psychological testing and a background review to match mentees with trained mentors outside of the organization.⁵³ Exchanges are entirely online and the mentor and mentee remain anonymous to one another. The purpose of this exchange is to engender real transparency and an open dialogue about a whole host of personal or professional topics that allow both parties to assist one another with specific or general

⁵² Meister and Willyerd, "Mentoring Millennials," 71.

⁵³ Ibid., 72.

problem sets, goal setting, or methods to deal with life issues. The U.S. military uses a similar tool, the True Growth Leadership seminar, provided to O-5 and above level Commanders and E-9/ Sergeants' Major during and following their attendance at a Pre-Command Course (PCC).

Pertinent to the literature presented in this study is the application of these concepts within the U.S. Armed Forces. The next chapter will examine case studies, research, and academic articles to assess how leaders might mitigate the internal factors discussed in this study to retain Millennials in the service. The case studies and research will specifically address commissioned officers as a sub-set of the overall military population. Additional research on the positive impact transformational leadership provides to effective organizational leadership within military units will be added as a supplement the case studies. This is done to further the author's assertion that employing this leadership technique can modify the interpersonal exchange between Millennials and their supervisors. This exchange reduces communication friction, merges the personal goals of Millennial officers with those of common organizational objectives, and reduces the internal factors that motivate Millennials to depart from service when led by transactional techniques.

The next chapter describes case studies and supplemental literature involving commissioned officers from the U.S. Armed Forces. Each of the services are represented and specific case studies from U.S. Army and Air Force survey data are shared to provide data on the topic of leading and influencing Millennials. The case studies share recommendations on best practices to adapt existing military doctrine to influence the internal factors that cause young commissioned officers to depart from service.

Chapter 3: Case Studies

This study utilizes case studies, research, and articles from all four of the U.S. military services to collect data on Millennial work-related attributes and generational conflicts, Millennial attitudes toward leadership styles, and/or mentoring techniques that improve leader/led communication and subsequently improve retention of commissioned officers. Each study provides clarifying data on which internal factors most affect the job satisfaction and/or retention desires of Millennial commissioned officers.

U.S. Army

Specific to the U.S. Army, research conducted by Dr. Leonard Wong at the U.S. Army War College recognized that a generational gap existed between how Baby Boomers and Gen Xers view the U.S. Army and each other.¹ He compares and contrasts data from Active Duty Army Captain surveys conducted in 1988 for Baby Boomers with exit surveys conducted in 1998 for Gen Xers to identify potential reasons behind why Gen Xer Captains were exiting the Active Duty Army at a much higher rate than previously witnessed. The study found that regardless of generational cohort, internal factors like job satisfaction, feelings of being part of something more important than one's own self, and a commitment by the Army into its service members are strong indicators for retention, despite the pull of external factors like a strong civilian economy.² He also found that

¹ Leonard Wong, "Generations Apart: Xers and Boomers in the Officer Corps," *Strategic Studies Institute*, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA, (October 2000), 3-4.

² Ibid., 18-20.

one's perception of reality was a strong indicator of future decision to remain in the Army or not.

A supporting article authored by LTC J.P. Clark, "Organizational Change and Adaptation in the U.S. Army," posits the external shock that Millennials present to the U.S. Army and thus the requirement to adapt existing leadership doctrine.³ The article provides discussion on military generational conflict and how personal life experiences heavily influence attitudes and preferences of older generations that are empowered to modify institutional change as a way to balance U.S. Army culture. The article advocates adapting existing Army doctrine now while Army institutions can still influence Millennials.

U.S. Marine Corps

Research on the U.S. Marine Corps centers around a master's thesis by Major David Fitzsimmons titled, "Generational Leadership in the U.S. Marine Corps." The thesis posits that the U.S. Marine Corps could glean increased effectiveness and efficiency by practicing generational leadership in the work place and by training leaders to understand the importance of cross-generational communication and motivation.⁴ The author identifies the common tasks of recruiting, training, motivating, evaluating, and retaining service members as tasks being inherent to all four of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Fitzsimmons also applies generational characteristics of Millennials to capture and discuss the generational disconnects this generational cohort presents to the older

³ J.P. Clark, "Adapting to Strategic Change," *Parameters* 46, no. 3 (2016), 25.

⁴ David Fitzsimmons, "Generational Leadership in the United States Marine Corps," *Master of Military Studies*, United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, (2012), Executive Summary.

generational cohorts leading them. The author discusses how these generational disconnects directly impact the capacity of Millennials to view the importance of, and their effectiveness to learn, their military occupational specialty. The author also identifies a gap within existing Marine Corps leadership doctrine on the value of understanding generational differences between cohorts and posits the importance of Marine leaders being introduced to the idea of generational cohorts and their differing characteristics. This thesis did not utilize survey data or live subjects, but instead synthesized existing literature on the topic to inform the study.

U.S. Air Force

The Air Force case study focuses on the work of Katherine A. Strus and is titled, “A Phenomenological Exploration of Air Force Millennial Officer Leadership Development Perspectives.”⁵ The study identifies and addresses the absence of a current Millennial voice from which to inform senior generational cohorts within the U.S. Air Force on formal and informal leadership development perspectives. The dissertation conducts and assesses in-depth interviews by Millennials and captures lived-leadership development experiences by this generational cohort.

Lived-leadership is defined by the author as those experiences, specific to the Millennial officer, that were experienced first-hand, through real-world experience and life lessons. The study provides recommendations to change ways existing leadership doctrine teaches newly commissioned officers. It also discusses how Millennial officers

⁵ Katherine A. Strus, “A Phenomenological Exploration Of Air Force Millennial Officer Leadership Development Perspectives,” PhD dissertation, University of Phoenix, (2015), 1.

desire input on their basic branch programs of instruction so they maximize potential for success at their first duty station.

U.S. Navy

The author found no existing research on generational cohorts and leadership involving Millennials in the U.S. Navy. The author did find an anecdotal article describing recommended changes to U.S. Navy leadership when it comes to leading Millennials. The article, written by Millennial U.S. Navy Lieutenant, Michael Mabrey, is titled, “Lead Us.” Mabrey identifies how U.S. Navy command culture should adapt to allow Millennials to collaborate and network in support of unifying goals or missions to most effectively be led.⁶ The author captures the positive changes his Aviation Squadron witnessed after his Gen Xer commander implemented organizational changes that were positively received by Millennial enlisted and junior officers within the command. He goes on to provide an example of how U.S. Navy senior leadership aboard an aircraft carrier utilized shared understanding and transformational leadership to increase efficiency and output of Millennial aviation maintenance personnel working in support of U.S. Navy combat operations in Afghanistan.

Transformational Leadership

The article by Colonel’s Lackey, Calvert, and Professor Kamena on the positive impact of transformational leadership on Millennials adds significantly to the argument in this thesis about the application of this specific leadership style to positively influence Millennial officers. The authors include the four components of transformational

⁶ Michael Mabrey, “Lead Us,” *Proceedings*, (February 2015), 2-3.

leadership first identified by Bernard Bass and Ronald Riggio.⁷ These four components are critical to the potential capacity of leaders to positively influence internal factors for Millennial workers that impact their willingness for continued service in the U.S. Armed Forces:⁸

- Idealized influence: Transformational leaders behave in ways that serve as a role model for those they lead.
- Inspirational motivation: Transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing valuable meaning and challenge to their followers' work.
- Intellectual stimulation: Transformational leaders stimulate their followers' effort to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways.
- Individualized consideration: Transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual followers' needs for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor.

The article discusses how the four components of transformational leadership dovetail with the Millennial characteristics of being sheltered, special, confident, team oriented, achievement oriented, conventional, and pressured, to produce positive influences on Millennials while they are led by transformational leadership styles.

A supporting article on transformational leadership by Major Joel Gleason in *Military Review* titled, "Transformational stories: How the Weekend Safety Brief Can Be a Forum for the Professional Military Ethic," articulates how hard it is for Millennials to internalize professional military ethics because of how older generational leaders present

⁷ B.M. Bass and R.E. Riggio, "Transformational Leadership," (2nd Edition), Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (2006), 16-25.

⁸ Paul Calvert, Gene Kamena, and James E. Lackey, "Millennials and Transformational Leaders: A Winning Team for the Future – Part 1 of 2," *Fires* (November-December 2010), 69-70.

the concept. Gleason asserts that Millennials should be provided examples of real world ethical success or failure that they can relate to. Millennials also require a work environment that promotes ethical behavior both on and off duty.⁹ Gleason advocates that transformational stories about ethical behavior and safety stick with Millennials when provided as a mental teaser because its easily retained and recalled.¹⁰

An examination of these case studies and the supplemental articles provides important results that the findings and recommendations will address in the next chapter. Millennials as a generational cohort provide several unique challenges for older generational cohorts to consider. The next chapter discusses the findings and how best to influence internal factors that drive Millennial desires to remain with an employer.

⁹ Joel P. Gleason, "Transformational Stories How the Weekend Safety Briefing Can Be a Forum for the Professional Military Ethic," *Military Review* (September-October 2014), 59-60.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

Chapter 4: Findings and Recommendations

The case studies and supporting research all identified commonalities to work trait characteristics for Millennials. Millennials must buy-into what they are doing if they are to remain with an organization.¹ It is important to a Millennial worker that they understand what they are doing is important. It is also vital to a Millennial that the organization they are part of provides them opportunity to improve both personally and professionally.² The importance of a Millennial worker doing something of importance comes from their upbringing with Baby Boomer and Generation X parents who told them they could accomplish anything desired hard enough.³ To a Millennial, working within an organization to attain a moral high ground assists in defining who Millennials are and what they value in their work-life experience.⁴ What Millennials do with their talents and who they share them with also helps define the concept of service-leadership.

The research by Dr. Wong captured the need for several institutional changes within the Army to facilitate increased retention of Generation X Captains:⁵

- Instill work/family/personal time balance. Bring the life of a junior officer back into an acceptable life-work balance.
- Make the Army community a fun place to work and live.
- Build time to reflect, as well as personally and professionally grow, during an officer's professional career.

¹ Hannah Bateman, "The Exit Interview: Millennial Perspectives On Why They Quit," PhD dissertation, Pepperdine University, 2014, 140.

² Rodney H. Deyoe and Terry L. Fox, "Identifying strategies to minimize workplace conflict due to generational Differences," *Journal of Behavioral Studies in Business* 5 (2012), 3-4.

³ Lynne C. Lancaster and David Stillman, *When Generations Collide Who They Are. Why They Clash. How to Solve the Generational Puzzle at Work*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 165.

⁴ Jan Ferri-Reed, "Three Ways Leaders Can Help Millennials Succeed," *The Journal for Quality and Participation* 35, no. 1 (April 2012), 18.

⁵ Wong, "Generations Apart: Xers and Boomers in the Officer Corps," 20-21.

- Model a work-life balance for subordinates. Junior officers believe what they see not what they hear, so living an example for others to follow is more important than talking about it.

These identified recommendations to adapt Army leadership culture matched many of the desired adaptations to institutional change that were also discussed by Katherine Strus when she examined Air Force Millennial officers and their feelings toward senior Air Force leadership and the institutional learning environment they are indoctrinated into.⁶ Additional reinforcement to the importance of, “leading Millennials by example” and “instilling a work-life balance,” was further reinforced by U.S. Air Force Colonels Hinote and Sundvall in their experience on leading Millennials.⁷

Dr. Wong also found the retention of junior officers critically hinged on the ability of senior leadership to preserve the aspects of the Army’s culture that first drew younger officers to join.⁸ He posited that if junior officers realize they have better opportunities within the Army than those perceived outside the Army, they will be more inclined to remain in service, despite the appeal of family-life or civilian opportunities as external factors in their personal lives.⁹ The value of a “perception” idea as an internal factor is realized across generational cohorts and becomes a strong determining factor for the retention of young officers, regardless of service.

Fitzsimmons in his research found the importance of leaders influencing the internal factors of Millennials allows them to buy into what they are doing, and believe in

⁶ Katherine A. Strus, “A Phenomenological Exploration Of Air Force Millennial Officer Leadership Development Perspectives,” PhD dissertation, University of Phoenix, (2015), 135-136.

⁷ Clinton S. Hinote and Timothy J. Sundvall, “Leading Millennials- An Approach that Works,” *Air & Space Power Journal* (January-February 2015), 137-138.

⁸ Leonard Wong, “Generations Apart: Xers and Boomers in the Officer Corps,” *Strategic Studies Institute*, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA, (October 2000), 20-21.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

the core values and concepts of the organization and leaders they serve. He posits that positively influencing internal factors is more important than any demonstrated loyalty of a Millennial to a single institution.¹⁰

The concept of influencing the internal factors within the life of a Millennial is very important to understand because it identifies an important focus for senior leadership in the retention of Millennials. When retaining Millennials, leaders should not focus on directing massive institutional changes to their organizations. Instead leaders should focus on what those institutions are offering Millennials by way of leadership, opportunities to excel and grow, team work, and the combining of organizational objectives with those of Millennials to meet their personal and professional goals and desire to attain a work-life balance.

Enter the transformational leadership model, which enables leaders to merge internal factors for Millennials with organizational objectives and the care and concern that Millennials demand from their leadership. Lackey, Calvert, and Kamena note that within the military model there will never be a time when transformational leadership was singlehandedly utilized because of the transactional nature required between leader and led.¹¹ Instead, they recommend a hybrid of both transactional and transformational leadership models. This facilitates the professional interaction required between senior and junior level commissioned officers utilizing the concept of decentralized decision making as part of mission command.

¹⁰ David Fitzsimmons, "Generational Leadership in the United States Marine Corps," *Master of Military Studies*, United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, (2012), 22-23.

¹¹ Paul Calvert, Gene Kamena, and James E. Lackey, "Millennials and Transformational Leaders: A Winning Team for the Future – Part 2 of 2," *Fires* (January-February 2011), 38.

Lackey, Calvert, and Kamena also recommend military senior leadership balance delegation of assignments with the freedom and flexibility to meet a Millennials need to be told what to do, not how to do it.¹² They go on to assert the importance of senior leaders offering Millennials increasing responsibility as a reward for accomplishments, balancing the role of “boss” with that of team player, and constantly providing constructive feedback as a means to reach the communication and feedback needs of Millennials.¹³ They conclude with senior leaders recognizing the importance that parents play in the lives of Millennials and the wisdom in leveraging this when it comes to discussing work-life balance and personal goals.

The Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps case studies all captured the glaring need for military leadership doctrine to address generational differences, potential conflict areas, and the need for leaders to understand and inculcate the concept of generational differences into leadership styles. Just as leaders understand and appreciate how culture, religion, gender, and sexual orientation influence the worldview of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines, service leaders must acknowledge generational differences between population groups to best facilitate management and retention of the force.

Fitzsimmons concluded that Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 6-11, *Leading Marines*, requires further expansion to acknowledge generational differences. He additionally recommends teaching Marine leaders about generational differences to better inform them of the motivations behind their Marines, their capacity to effectively communicate with Marines from younger generational cohorts, and the capacity to

¹² Calvert, Kamena, and Lackey, “Millennials and Transformational Leaders: A Winning Team for the Future – Part 2 of 2,” 38.

¹³ Ibid.

inspire Marine leaders to develop their own leadership styles to overcome generational differences.¹⁴

Strus recommended changes to the existing cultural heritage and hierarchical leadership structure of the U.S. Air Force to improve opportunities for Millennials to provide input to the topics and on how officer leadership programs of study are presented during basic branch education levels. She asserts this might enhance recruitment strategies for commissioned officers from the Millennial generational cohort since existing educational training models are outdated with long power point presentations on boring topics and less about the actual duties these new officers are expected to complete. Strus's research found this frustrated new Air Force officers because they did not feel existing programs of instruction on leadership prepared them to succeed in their first job out of their basic course.¹⁵ To summarize the thoughts about required institutional changes to leadership within the U.S. military, J.P. Clark claims that Millennials are the external shock to the U.S. military institution. They are a force requiring adaptation and changes to existing traditional thinking and methods.¹⁶ He goes on to assert that decades from now Millennials may be referred to as the "revolutionary" generation.

The case studies and literature all came to similar conclusions when identifying and outlining ways to retain Millennial workers. Millennials view work as an extension of their life and as an expression of what they propose to do for a certain season of their life. Millennials chooses a place to serve that allows them to learn more about things that interest them; so they can grow and succeed personally and professionally. Then they can

¹⁴ Fitzsimmons, "Generational Leadership in the United States Marine Corps," 23-24.

¹⁵ Strus, "A Phenomenological Exploration Of Air Force Millennial Officer Leadership Development Perspectives," Abstract.

¹⁶ J.P. Clark, "Adapting to Strategic Change," *Parameters* 46, no. 3 (2016), 32-33.

move on within the organization, or move on to another organization, all while seeking opportunities that best meet their personal goals.

To retain Millennials, the case studies and literature all conclude that organizational leaders must widen their structural lens to get after the internal factors that motivate Millennials to stay. Though pay is important, in most instances it ranked third or lower for reasons a Millennial worker remained.¹⁷ Bateman found the number one reason Millennials primarily remained with an organization was because they viewed themselves as a critical participant in some purpose or task that was important to the overall success of the company/organization and for some greater good in society.¹⁸ Millennials choose to serve for beliefs and purposes that are important to them and their loyalties do not lie with a specific organization or institution, they lie with those they serve with and with those leaders and organizations that can best get them where they are trying to go. When this ceases to be a perceived reality, they depart in search of another place to serve.¹⁹

The findings and recommendations of this study were specific to Millennial workers within the civilian sector and those Millennial commissioned officers serving with the U.S. Armed Forces. The author will now transition to providing overall conclusions to the research topic as well as identify gaps within existing research that would be beneficial for future studies.

¹⁷ Bateman, "The Exit Interview: Millennial Perspectives On Why They Quit," 143-144.

¹⁸ Ibid., 132-138

¹⁹ Ibid., 132-138.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Recommendations for Future Study

Future study on the impact that the new military retirement system will have on the retention of commissioned officers currently serving on active duty, specifically those with less than 12-years of service, is necessary because this presents a strong external factor to the Millennial officer population. Knowing what we do about Millennials, providing them an opportunity to walk away at the 6-10 year mark with a viable 401K plan in hand seems counterproductive to the goals of the Department of Defense in retaining some of the strongest human capital the U.S. has to offer.

Further study on transformational leadership techniques with Millennial military service members should occur in an effort to explain how or if this leadership style adequately mitigates for the strong pull of external factors on Millennials when it comes to retention. One could anecdotally assume that over time there might be an inverse relationship between the influence that internal and external factors would have on a Millennial military service member. Generally as people age, their aversion to engaging in risky behavior, like a significant job change, decreases, especially if concerned with the responsibility of providing for a family unit.

Conclusions

With the transition of Millennials into the bulk of low to mid-range leadership positions within the U.S. Armed Forces, a requirement now exists to adapt existing leadership doctrine to influence institutional learning and improve the hierarchical communication techniques between generational cohorts. It is not the definition or

examples on leadership within current doctrine that requires adaptation, but the complete absence of a dialogue about generational cohorts and the friction manifested between opposing worldviews and individual behaviors that requires attention.

This study provides insight into adapting existing hierarchical leadership styles and coaching/mentoring programs within the U.S. Armed Forces to improve the leadership, communication, and mentoring techniques between senior generational cohorts and the Millennial commissioned officers they lead. By providing a service-based environment, senior leaders can understand and appreciate the differences inherent within their Millennial officer populations and then more effectively reach them. This effect has proven to mitigate work place conflict between generational cohorts and addresses existing bureaucratic barriers to improve job satisfaction for Millennial officers and should result in potentially higher retention rates for this specific population.

Leading Millennials in the U.S. military using existing hierarchical leadership models is a challenging proposition because the leader-led relationship tends to be transactional in nature. The desire by Millennials to not only connect with their boss, but also with co-workers and others outside of their immediate chain of command, creates friction for traditional thinking Baby Boomer and Generation X leaders. Potential mitigating strategies for this friction would be for senior leadership to explain why tasks are important to them and the objectives of the organization. Including Millennials in working groups for planning efforts to make them feel included as part of the decision making process also works well in gaining their buy-in to important decisions or policy directives. Once decisions are made, using Facebook or company intranet web-based knowledge centers to transmit policy guidance or directives to the force are all effective

techniques available to leaders of Millennial filled organizations. These techniques improve communication between leader and led, building a relationship centered on trust and respect, which is proven to actualize the creative, cared-for, and team-oriented spirit inherent within Millennial workers.

Transformational leadership techniques were then introduced as a means to provide senior leaders with tools that motivate Millennial subordinates to realize their fullest potential, while also allowing organizations to complete missions. Aligning the objectives and goals of the individual follower with those of the leader, the larger group, and the organization, more closely aligns with Bass and Riggio's identified characteristics (team oriented, confident, achievement oriented, conventional, pressured, special, and sheltered) for Millennials than those of transactional leadership.¹ This study asserts that coupling this finding with the concept of leaders demonstrating a Service versus Servant leadership attitude results in Millennial officers that are more than willing to follow their leaders, even while operating within the constraints of a military-structured hierarchy.

Using current day technologies and the high desire to receive feedback, Millennials require that we take a serious look at how mentoring is performed within military organizations. Millennials are not just looking for performance-based feedback from their first or second line supervisors, they are looking to know how others accomplish similar tasks and achieve success at performing similar duties across organizations. Connected feedback from others is very important for Millennials; to

¹ Calvert, Kamena, and Lackey, "Millennials and Transformational Leaders: A Winning Team for the Future – Part 1 of 2," 70.

receive this they must plug into a larger network than existing military mentoring programs being offered.

A good start to online and networked feedback is the U.S. Army's Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF 360) tool, which allows an individual to receive responses from the immediate supervisor, peers, and subordinates selected by the individual being assessed. The weakness in the MSAF 360 tool is that feedback to the recipient is strictly voluntary by those selected to provide it, leading to inconsistent results for the recipient. Re-looking the existing up-or-out system to talent management is also strongly considered to retain the manifest, and improve the un-manifested talent, within the U.S. military. Harvesting the un-manifested talent within the U.S. military Millennial population may very well lead to the retention of many highly technical, critically difficult to fill, military occupational skill sets like cyber security, information systems management, or space operations. Skills that probably do not require the next great military leader, but instead, technically competent intellectuals who offer an important niche capability to future U.S. military capacity.

Reverse, anonymous, and group mentoring models have created some positive feedback opportunities for employees within the civilian workforce. Similar in theory to a military lessons learned center, a Millennial could plug into a group mentoring session specifically geared toward their career path and join in with a group of like-minded professionals dealing with similar situations or struggles. These alternative mentoring models also allow recipients to give and receive feedback from people representing all generational cohorts (Baby Boomer, Gen Xer, and Millennial) within the U.S. military.

Introducing or expanding some or all of these recommendations into existing U.S. military doctrine provides for an introduction of change into U.S. military institutions. Without this, senior military leaders risk influencing military institutions with the key lessons learned from generational cohorts and the impact that differing leadership styles, communication, and mentoring techniques have on work place satisfaction. Together and in concert, these directed actions can assist U.S. military senior leaders in mitigating existing external conditions within the military institution like, high operational tempo, the new retirement system, and a higher percentage of married service members. This avoids the potential for a generation-driven transitional gap within the commissioned officer population. Unless Baby Boomer and Generation Xer leaders of today set conditions for the Millennial officers they leave behind, the U.S. military risks losing its talented human capital and capacity to fight and win future wars.

Appendix 1

Definition of Key Terms

The study of generations can be problematic due to the inconsistencies between variables within these large, diverse age groups.¹ Generational studies provide valuable insight into how an age cohort develops and behaves along certain common generational themes.² The terms used within this study are defined as follows:

- Baby Boomers or Boomers: Individuals born in the U.S. after World War II between 1946 and 1964, who grew up in an era of opportunity, progress, and general optimism across the U.S.³ The major world view influences for this generational cohort were the advent of the television, the civil rights movement, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, Woodstock, and Watergate.⁴ This population cohort is estimated to have reached 77 million people and they make up the senior most members of our current military leadership.⁵ The military careers for most of these officers began during the Reagan administration and they trained and prepared for Soviet invasion of the 'Fulda Gap' in Western Germany.⁶ This generation successfully led combat formations as junior Field Grade officers during Operation Desert Storm, witnessed the transition of military operations toward peace keeping in Somalia, Kosovo, and Bosnia, and served as O-6 and E-9 level leaders and above during Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom.⁷
- Culture: The values, concepts, and outlooks inherited from civilian society.⁸
- Generational Cohort: A collection of people in a delineated, age-group population, that for the purposes of this study exists within the United States of America. This population experiences the same significant historical and social events during a period of time that their memories and lives are most impacted

¹ S.M. Crampton and J.W. Hodge, "Generations in the workplace: Understanding age diversity," *The Business Review* 9, no. 1 (2007), 16.

² Howe and Strauss, *Millennials rising: the next great generation*, (New York, NY: Random House 2000), 14.

³ Ibid., 5.

⁴ David Fitzsimmons, "Generational Leadership in the United States Marine Corps," *Master of Military Studies*, United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, (2012), 4.

⁵ Cox, Park, Sondheimer, and Wilson, III, "Growing Military Professionalism Across Generations," *Military Review*, (Profession of Arms Reader September), (November-December 2011), 34-35.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ J.P. Clark, "Adapting to Strategic Change," *Parameters* 46, no. 3 (2016), 26.

(ages 5-18) and their reactions to these events help define their internal belief system and world view about the environment.⁹

- Generational Differences: Unique values and behaviors that characterize distinct generational cohorts.¹⁰
- Generation X or Gen Xer: Individuals born in the U.S. between 1965 and 1979 who grew up in the shadow of the baby boomers.¹¹ Major worldview influencers for this generational cohort were the space race against the Soviet Union, the AIDS epidemic, the proliferation of gang violence and drugs within the United States, the introduction of the 24-hour news cycle with Cable News Network (CNN), the end of the Cold War, and the invention and introduction of computers.¹² This population cohort only reached 46 million people and they make up the mid-to early senior level leaders within the current U.S. military.¹³ The military careers for many of these officers began after the Cold War during a time of technological innovation within the U.S. Armed Forces.¹⁴ These service members learned to conduct Military Operations Other Than War and cut their teeth as junior officers and NCOs leading forces in combat during Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. This population currently makes up most of our Field Grade and senior NCO ranks; with some now entering the General/Flag Officer level.¹⁵
- Institutions: The mechanisms by which a military deliberately attempts to shape the profession using curriculum at military schools, policies governing selection of personnel, systems of promotion, and methods of organizing and giving preference to certain functional specialties over others.¹⁶
- Leadership: An ability to influence followers to adjust their behavior to meet the operational or organizational mission or goals of a larger group or organization.¹⁷ The U.S. Army defines leadership as, "...the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization."¹⁸ U.S. Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 6-11 describes leadership as action demonstrated for other Marines to witness. It is action that possesses the essence of demonstrated leadership, which sticks with a young Marine. The Marine Corps Commandant describes leadership

⁹ Carolyn W. Fore, "Next Generation Leadership: Millennials As Leaders," *PhD dissertation*, Capella University, (2012), 16.

¹⁰ Howe and Strauss, "Millennials rising: the next great generation," 8.

¹¹ Fore, "Next Generation Leadership: Millennials As Leaders," 16.

¹² Fitzsimmons, "Generational Leadership in the United States Marine Corps," 5.

¹³ Cox, Park, Sondheimer, and Wilson, III, "Growing Military Professionalism Across Generations," 35.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Clark, "Adapting to Strategic Change," 26.

¹⁷ Fore, "Next Generation Leadership: Millennials As Leaders," 17.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of the Army, *Field Manual 6-22, Leader Development*, U.S. Department of the Army, (Washington, DC: 30 June 2015), 1-3.

as, "...action and attitude, not words...Don't tell me how good you are; Show me!"¹⁹ Air Force Doctrine Volume 2 defines leadership as, "...the art and science of motivating, influencing, and directing Airmen to understand and accomplish the Air Force mission in joint warfare."²⁰

- Leadership style: A leader's preferred manner and approach that is exhibited to provide direction/guidance, accomplish goals, and engage, motivate, and inspire followers.²¹

- Millennials...also referred to as Generation Y, Echo Boomers, and the Net Generation: Individuals born in the United States between 1980 and 2000 who have always had access to cellular telephones, computer technology, and grew up in a world of multi-tasking, text messaging, and instant messaging.²² Major worldview influencers for this generational cohort were the birth and commercialization of the internet, the U.S. economic recession of 2008, the Oklahoma City Bombing, the attacks against the Pentagon and World Trade by Muslim Extremists on September 11, 2001, and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.²³ This population cohort ranges between 77 and 80 million people, making them the majority of entry to mid-grade level personnel currently serving within the U.S. military.²⁴ The military careers for these officers and NCOs began after the attacks against the U.S. on 9-11. This population joined the military during a time of armed conflict and has never realized a time of peace.²⁵ For this generation, doctrine on counterinsurgency and counterterrorism and a focus on decentralized, small-unit operations is the norm.²⁶ They are "irreverent" to hierarchal command and control, tactically proficient, but lack an appreciation for the operational and strategic levels of warfare.²⁷

¹⁹ U.S. Department of the Navy, "Leading Marines," *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 6-11*, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps (Washington, DC: 27 November 2002), page 2 of the Forward.

²⁰ U.S. Department of the Air Force, "Volume II-Leadership," *Air Force Doctrine Document*, U.S. Department of the Air Force, (Washington, DC: 08 August 2015), 27.

²¹ Fore, "Next Generation Leadership: Millennials As Leaders," 17.

²² Ibid.

²³ Fitzsimmons, "Generational Leadership in the United States Marine Corps," 6.

²⁴ Cox, Park, Sondheimer, and Wilson, III, "Growing Military Professionalism Across Generations," 36.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

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